

O'Malley running mate

raises his profile

House leadership post keeps Brown in spotlight

Washington Times

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

1/22/06

ANNAPOLIS — Maryland voters knew Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley even before he announced he would run for the Democratic nomination for governor this year.

Now it appears his running mate, Delegate Anthony G. Brown of Prince George's County, also is trying to raise his profile.

Mr. Brown, the House's majority whip, seemingly has been everywhere in the legislature's first two weeks.

He led the debate to overturn Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr.'s veto of a bill requiring Wal-Mart to spend more on health care. He spoke in favor of the successful move to override the Republican governor's veto of a bill to raise the minimum wage.

He even gave the chamber's Martin Luther King Jr. Day address.

But Mr. Brown's position as majority whip, whose job is to secure votes for party leaders, could be problematic for him. Anything he says may be interpreted as speaking for Mr. O'Malley.

If he goes too hard after Mr. Ehrlich, a Republican, he could appear to be campaigning. And his duties in the House require him to build consensus among Democrats — even those who prefer Mr. O'Malley's rival, Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan.

Mr. Brown insists he won't be distracted this session by the fall elections, and that his job simply is to lay out the argu-

ments of House Speaker Michael E. Busch, Anne Arundel County Democrat, and his party.

He says those positions are likely to meld nicely with Mr. O'Malley's platform.

"I think the roles are complementary," Mr. Brown said from his legislative office.

He noted Mr. Busch's priorities this term include more money to help farmers cut pol-

lution and tougher controls on people convicted of sex offenses against children.

"These are the kinds of programs and policies that I think in an O'Malley-Brown administration could be part of our agenda," he said.

Mr. O'Malley said Mr. Brown's leadership role in the

House would be more of a boost to the campaign than a challenge.

"He'll always be at the center of the big questions we face as a state for the next four months," Mr. O'Malley said during an early session stop in Annapolis. "He'll be making policy and people will be able to see what that policy is."

Even lawmakers who prefer Mr. Duncan said it was unlikely Mr. Brown would be put in a position where he would have to argue a point that doesn't fit with Mr. O'Malley's position.

Mr. Brown, they said, is an astute politician who knows better than to alienate pro-Duncan Democrats.

"On issues that are taking place there's very little disagreement between O'Malley and Duncan," said House Majority Leader Kumar P. Barve of Montgomery County, a Duncan backer. "The main differences are style and management, not policy."

Republicans for now aren't grumbling that Mr. Brown gets a natural speaking post all session as he prepares for a statewide run.

But they acknowledged they will be paying close attention to how Mr. Brown navigates the session.

"I think we're waiting to see how that plays out," said Del-

egate Anthony J. O'Donnell of Calvert County, who is Mr. Brown's counterpart on the Republican side. "He's a professional and I'm sure he'll handle it that way. The jury's still out."